

CLOSE OF THE OTTAWA SESSION

SPEECH

OF

HON. W. S. FIELDING, M.P.

MINISTER OF FINANCE

IN

REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

LIBERAL EXPENDITURES—REDUCED RATE OF
TAXATION—SMALL INCREASE OF DEBTIN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, AT OTTAWA, ON FRIDAY, AUG. 11, 1899,
JUST BEFORE THE PROROGATION, HON. MR. FIELDING
REPLIED TO THE CRITICISMS OF HON. MR. FOSTER

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Mr. Fielding). We are at the close of a very long and laborious, and I am sure we will all now say, somewhat tiresome session, and at this moment, even if the time were at our disposal, I do not think the House or the country would be disposed to encourage any very long speeches. The House has had its fair share of long speeches this session, and those hon. members who have done us the honour to remain here until the end, and the long suffering public outside, will, no doubt, feel relieved to be given a rest from parliamentary speech-making.

The hon. member for York (Mr. Foster) undertook to review, from the Opposition standpoint, the work of the session. Doing so he covered very considerable ground, some of it, perhaps, somewhat hastily and necessarily so, but he opened up a wide range of questions, each one of which, if time permitted, would invite reply. I desire

now, in the short time at my disposal, to devote myself chiefly to presenting to the House some facts and figures bearing on the financial position of the country, which, I am sure, will tend to assist those who wish to make an intelligent study of the subject. I shall be obliged, therefore, to refer only hurriedly to some other questions to which the hon. gentleman alluded, and yet I would not pass these questions altogether.

LIBERAL POLICY CARRIED OUT.

The hon. gentleman quoted the utterances of a number of members of the Liberal party, and then proceeded to claim that the policy of the Government had not been in all respects in accord with these utterances. Well, every man who knows anything of parliamentary government knows that the gentleman's Opposition have always a wider

than those on the Government

side. The responsibilities of Government do not rest upon hon. gentlemen to the left of the Speaker. They will always, no matter which party may be in power, claim a wider range of discussion and opinion than is likely to be claimed by those charged with the responsibilities of Government; and it would not be surprising, no matter which party was in power, that hon. gentlemen in Opposition should be found expressing opinions that represent their own political ideas, but not necessarily the views of the party at large. Then, it is the very essence of the Liberal party that there shall be liberty among its members to differ on many points, provided they be united on the main questions. Look at what we find in this House to-day. We find hon. gentlemen opposite on great questions differing widely. We find the hon. leader of the Opposition announcing at one moment that a certain policy brought down in relation to the opening of the Yukon was a good policy; and so anxious to endorse that policy that, not content to wait for its parliamentary announcement, or for a newspaper reporter to come and interview him, he actually sent for a reporter in Montreal, to whom he unbosomed himself, and declared that, in his judgment, the contract for building a railway to the Yukon was an excellent measure, and the contractors who had undertaken the work were, perhaps, the one set of men in the whole Dominion to put through a project of that character. But a little while afterwards, we find him in this House, under the whip lash of the hon. member for East York (Mr. McLean), entirely changing his policy and declaring that the whole thing was most ruinous for the country.

We found on vital questions this session the hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace) advancing one view and the hon. members sitting around him advancing another. We found the hon. member for York (Mr. Foster) laying it down as a grave principle that in dealing with the great harbour of Montreal, it would be an unsound policy for this Government to do anything directly, but everything should be done through the Harbour Commissioners. A few minutes later the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) came in and declared, as warmly and eloquently as he could, that it was entirely unsound to do anything through the Harbour Commissioners, and that everything should be done direct by the Government. If, by and by, in the dim and distant future, these two gentlemen should come into power and have to deal with the commission and harbour of Montreal, how would they square themselves one with the other? Each one might be quoted as having announced the policy of the party. So it was with a number of other gentlemen. We found the hon. member for *latitude* in *ay* (Mr. *Sp* *le*), who, I believe, for *time*, is *in* this seat this sitting

Mr. WALLACE. We must give him the medal.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE. Yes, he deserves a medal for assiduous attendance. He also repeatedly expressed views differing from those of his associates. I refer to these things to show that in Opposition there are always somewhat wider differences of opinion than exist in the ranks of the Government. It would not be strange if, during all the years the Liberal party sat in Opposition, there had been some differences of opinion among its members with regard to public questions. No one will say that it is a fair criticism to quote the utterance of some particular member of the party, and then say that because the policy of the Government has not exactly complied with the lines of that quotation, therefore, the party has been false to its pledges.

The policy of the Liberal party, Sir, was declared in a formal way. In the convention which was held in Ottawa in 1893, certain resolutions were passed. These were the policy of the Liberal party and by these the party is to be tried. And I venture to say that, in the whole history of parliamentary government in Canada, there never was a political party which carried out so fully in so short a time the pledges with which they went to the country. By one of these resolutions we pledged ourselves to reform the tariff. The tariff has been reformed; it has been reformed so that hon. gentlemen opposite, though they talk about it, though they denounce it, have never dared to come before this House and place on the Journals of the House a resolution condemning it. It has been reformed to the satisfaction of the Liberals of the country, while fair-minded Conservatives from ocean to ocean have acknowledged that the change which has taken place has proved to be adapted to the industries of the country, and that under that change Canada has prospered as never before. The Liberal party promised to introduce a Redistribution Bill. They have fulfilled that promise; and if that Bill is not on the statute-books of the country to-day it is not the fault of the Liberal party. You may take the whole range of matters discussed at the Liberal convention at Ottawa, and you will find that in almost every instance the pledge given by the Liberal party has already been fulfilled by them in letter and in spirit.

YUKON ADMINISTRATION.

The hon. gentleman to-day referred again, for the thousandth time, to the Yukon matter. Sir, there is no part of the administration of this Government on which we are prouder to appeal to the country than our administration of the Yukon

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district. If hon. gentlemen will but think—as I am sure fair-minded people outside will think—of the difficulties that had to be encountered in the administration of the government of that country, I am sure there will be a general belief that the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Slifton), who is particularly charged with the responsibilities of government in that section of the Dominion, deserves the highest credit for the manner in which he has carried on public affairs there. It is easy for us here, thousands of miles away, to talk of things that went wrong out there in the Yukon. It would have been a marvel indeed, if, with all the disadvantages, with all the difficulties of distance, the absence of railways, telegraphs or other means of communication, you had had a perfect human government in Dawson City. You do not get a perfect human government even in Ottawa, with all the advantages you have, with an organized civil service and the thousand and one facilities for carrying on a Government. When you consider the difficulties, the only marvel to my mind is that so few things occurred in the Yukon district of which the Government or the people have a right to complain. However, hon. gentlemen opposite harp on what they call the refusal to investigate, Sir, the thing that greatly troubles these hon. gentlemen is, not that we refused to investigate, but that we did investigate and showed that there was no foundation for the statements made. There was an investigation, an investigation by a man capable in the highest degree of carrying on an investigation in such a country as that. What was the class of people with whom he had to deal? A mining population, largely a rough and rugged people accustomed to the ways of the mining camp. They want to feel that the man they are dealing with is a man of independence and sturdy integrity. I venture to say that the average miner in the Yukon district would far sooner have an investigation of any matter in which he is concerned by such an honest, independent, fearless man as William Ogilvie, whom they had known for years and whom they had honoured and esteemed, than by the ablest judge of the Supreme Court that Canada could send out there. What were the charges? Charges against minor officials, such as might occur in any country. When these matters were brought to the notice of the Minister of the Interior, they were investigated, and the trifling irregularities are not to be considered for a moment in judging of the administration of the country. The investigation proved that the Minister of the Interior has every reason to congratulate himself upon the results of his administration of the Yukon district. There was one phase of the subject that was not investigated. And it was not investigated because hon. gentlemen opposite took very good care not to permit us to have an in-

vestigation. They endeavoured by every insinuation, by reference to rumours and stories and tell-tale talk, by reference to what somebody said on an ocean steamer, and what somebody else had whispered on the streets of Vancouver, and what somebody else was reported to have said elsewhere—by such means they endeavoured to convey the impression that the Minister of the Interior was in some way affected in his position as a Minister of the Crown and as a man by the transactions of the Yukon district. But when that suggestion was made, the Minister of the Interior and his colleagues on his behalf met it with the demand: If there is one man in this Parliament of Canada who knows of or believes that he can establish any facts against the reputation of a Minister of the Crown, let him stand up in his place and say that he can establish those things before a committee of the House, and the committee shall be granted, an investigation shall take place and justice shall be done to the fullest degree. But not a member opposite was prepared to make a charge. They continued to suggest, to insinuate, to whisper, to retell what had been said here, there, or elsewhere; but when the demand was made, as the hon. Minister had a right to make it, on the floor of Parliament, that an investigation should take place before his peers, before a committee of this House, before that tribunal which the principles of Parliament have established as the proper tribunal for the trial of a Minister of the Crown, his demand was met by silence on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite. And so we are able to sum up this Yukon matter, that the charges made affected no member of the Government, and when they were subjected to an investigation by an honest, independent, fearless inquirer, it was fully established that in no material matter was there anything wrong in the administration of the Yukon district. Small irregularities occurred—I do not pretend to deny it—but it would be a marvel if such had not been the case. The only wonder is that there were not more. If we wish to be fair, we must acknowledge that the Minister of the Interior met his accusers in a fair, honourable and manly way, and that hon. gentlemen opposite, though they were ready to insinuate and to suggest, failed completely to establish one iota that would reflect upon the honour of the hon. Minister or lessen his reputation or usefulness as a Minister of the Crown.

URGENT EXPENDITURES.

The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) had much to say about money having been spent without due parliamentary authority. I thought we had threshed that out pretty well. But for the hundredth time, the hon. gentleman told us that in connection with the initial proceedings of the Yukon tele-

graph, money voted by Parliament for other purposes was improperly used. I shall make but a brief reference to this, because it is an old story. The Government, recognizing that there was urgent need that immediate steps should be taken to construct a telegraph line to the Yukon district, authorized the Minister to appoint an officer and a party of men to go there and take the initial proceedings; and for that purpose they advanced him, out of the public funds, a sum of \$10,000 or \$12,000. Now, suppose there was absolutely no foundation in parliamentary authority for that, suppose it could be shown that there was not a shadow of foundation, is it an offence for which this Parliament or the people would be disposed to condemn any Minister? No man questions the urgency. If ever there was a question of urgency, it was that we should proceed to open up telegraphic communication with that country. I do not think it would be necessary to refer to any facts at all to give such a vindication of the action of the Minister of Public Works in that respect as would be accepted by the country at large. But, as I had occasion to point out to the hon. member for York, N.B., (Mr. Foster) the other night, such a charge comes very strangely indeed from him when we have upon the records of this House the fact that at the close of the session of 1896, no sooner was Parliament prorogued than the hon. gentleman, without any law, without any Act of Parliament, without going to Council and getting an Order in Council, as the Minister of Public Works did, entered into a bargain whereby this country was committed to pay \$25,000, twice as much as the Minister of Public Works advanced to Mr. Charleson, to pay \$25,000 to an American company for harbour work in the harbour of Port Dover. I say there was not a shadow of authority for the position the hon. gentleman took. If you want to look over the whole range of our parliamentary affairs and select a public expenditure, or a committing of the Government to a public expenditure, without a vestige of authority, that one item is the one which would be selected above all others. Yet we have not condemned the hon. gentleman for it; we have accepted his own plea, that it was an urgent matter. All we have done is to say that, in the light of that transaction, it would be strange indeed, if the hon. gentleman should come here and ask us to condemn the Minister of Public Works because he made an arrangement, not with a foreign steamship company, not with some persons to do work in a harbour that might possibly have been delayed for a few months without serious consequences, but because he advanced to a public official some \$10,000 or \$12,000, in order to start at once the construction of a telegraph line which will give us communication with that distant section of Canada.

TENDER AND CONTRACT.

Then, the hon. gentleman had very much to say about giving contracts, and doing work by day labour. Now, as I have repeatedly stated in this House, I am disposed to think that, in dealing with public moneys, the safer policy will be, as a rule, and subject to the necessary exceptions, to do public work by public tender and contract. I believe that is so to a very large extent indeed. But let us not run away with the idea that tender and contract is a perfect system. Tender and contract not infrequently puts works into the hands of irresponsible and incapable people, people who, at the time they undertake the work, persuade you that they are capable and responsible. But it often happens that the result of your giving that contract is that you give the work to people who are not able to do it satisfactorily, and the result is very serious delay and injury to the public service. There may be exceptional circumstances which will justify a departure from the tender and contract system, and my opinion is, that in many cases the public interest might be advanced by doing the work by day labour, if you are quite sure of getting thoroughly independent, honest and capable men to put in charge of the work. I do not say that we are laying it down as a principle, that we should abandon tender and contract; on the contrary, I advocate the reverse policy; I think, as a rule, as I have said before, it is a sound principle, it is a safer principle, notwithstanding some disadvantages. But there is another point to which I would like to call the attention of the House, concerning what has been said with regard to the doing of work by the Minister of Public Works without tender and contract. No instance has been given, so far as I can remember, where, as a result of that, the people of Canada paid one cent more than a fair and honest price for anything that was done. Whether or not, as a theory, it was better to have done the work by contract and tender, is fairly open to discussion, and my own judgment leans towards the tender and contract system. But let it not be supposed for a moment that in these departures from that system by the Minister of Public Works there has been any evidence whatever that the public interest has suffered.

WEST HURON AND MANITOBA.

The hon. gentleman went into the West Huron election case, and undertook to show, although that committee has only made a partial report of that investigation, and that investigation is not completed, although but little has been established there which proves anything—notwithstanding that, the hon. gentleman treated it as a fixed and settled fact that there had been gross wrongs

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in the West Huron district by the officials, because it is only with the officials that we have to deal. It is rather a curious fact that the hon. gentlemen interested in West Huron did not avail themselves of the privileges that were open to them in the courts. It has been established before this committee that all the facts which they have now brought to the notice of this committee were in their possession before the time had expired for presenting a petition. It is a very strange thing, and not without its significance, that the hon. gentlemen who are now so much interested in West Huron, did not avail themselves of the machinery of the courts. However that may be, they have seen fit to neglect the courts and to bring the matter before this House. I say that if the right hon. the Prime Minister had refused that investigation, when it was demanded, he could have done so with very much justice on his side. He could have pointed to the fact that they had the courts open to them; and they had neglected them. But so anxious was the right hon. the Prime Minister to remove the shadow of doubt from any action on the part of the Government, or on the part of the officials in connection with West Huron, that he immediately assented to the proposition, and so we have had the investigation.

Curiously enough, however, Mr. Speaker, while these gentlemen are declaring that great wrongs had been done in West Huron, and that these wrongs should be punished, they have devoted a large part of two sessions to the work of covering up the wrongdoing that occurred in the province of Manitoba in connection with the ballot-box stuffing in that district. For a long time last session, and for a considerable time this session, the hon. gentlemen opposite have been trying their best to cover up the wrongs that took place there, and to condemn the Government because the Government applied public moneys to the punishment of the wrong-doers. That matter has been fully investigated by the committee, and here is the report which the committee has presented to the House on the Manitoba case. I will only quote a single passage, and it is worth placing on record:

That the evidence laid before the committee conclusively proves that there was an organized system of tampering with the ballots in said election, in said district, and that in the opinion of your committee the circumstances referred to amply justified the expenditure of the sums disbursed by the Government, and the Government was acting in the public interest in the course which it has pursued in regard thereto.

Mr. FOSTER. Will the hon. gentleman read the report of the minority committee?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I am reading a single sentence from one report. I am willing at once to assume—I do not want to detain the House by reading it—but I am willing at once to say that the minority

of the committee dissented from that finding. But still the fact remains—for I was present, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, and heard most of the investigation—I say that the evidence produced before that committee was most conclusive as to the rascalities that took place in the district of Macdonald. I say that, with that knowledge before them, with all these facts before them, produced by themselves, the hon. gentlemen opposite have spent a very considerable part of the last two years in trying to condemn the Government for applying a portion of public money for the exposure and punishment of the persons concerned in that rascality.

THE VACATING OF CERTAIN SEATS.

The hon. gentleman had much to say to-day regarding the action of certain Ministers in connection with elections to this House at the beginning of the present Parliament. My hon. friend the Minister of Railways and Canals, he said, had actually endeavoured to obtain a vacancy through the retirement of an hon. member who was elected on the other side. The hon. member also stated that when I, in assuming the position to which I had the honour of being chosen, as a Minister of the Crown, required to obtain a seat in this House I did so by trafficking in public offices, and had given an hon. member of this House the promise of a judgeship in order to obtain my seat. Sir, there is not the shadow of foundation for the statement. If we are both spared to come back here again, I challenge the hon. member to bring the matter up before any committee of this House, and if he can show that I ever gave any person a promise of a judgeship to obtain my seat in this House, I will not hold that seat for a single day. But suppose that was correct.

Mr. FOSTER. There was a wicked partner.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. No, there was no wicked partner. The hon. gentleman has had more to do with wicked partners than I have. But suppose it were true, suppose it were as true as it is untrue, in what position would the hon. gentleman be, or anybody opposite be, to assail an hon. member of this House on that ground? Does he forget that he sat in the Ministry with a Minister, who subsequently became Prime Minister, who obtained a seat in this House by inducing a member to take a place on the bench in order that he might obtain his seat? Does he forget that an hon. member of a different political party from his own was approached and induced to resign his seat for the gentleman who was then appointed to be Minister of Justice?

Mr. BERGERON. That is very hard upon the hon. member for Antigonish.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. The hon. member for Antigonish resigned his seat. I make no complaint against him; he had a perfect right to accept a judgeship if hon. gentlemen offered it to him. I am not dealing with the question of the hon. member for Antigonish, because he had a perfect right to accept an honourable position on the bench when hon. gentlemen opposite offered it to him. But the hon. gentleman opposite, if he is now sincere, was not in a position to approach that hon. member to ask him to vacate his seat and take a position on the bench. And, so, with that fact in the mind of the hon. gentleman, I venture to think that it might have been wiser if he had not referred to any trafficking in public offices on the part of the Government.

FINANCIAL QUESTIONS.

But I prefer to devote the little time we have to the financial question, and necessarily one must hurry over it very rapidly. I have noticed that there is a disposition on the part of hon. members in this House, and of their press, to repeat an old trick of theirs, and it is that of grouping together all the expenditures of the year, all the estimates of the year, capital, income, railway subsidies and everything else, and placing them in comparison with the expenditures on consolidated fund account of the late Government in the last year that they were in office. The hon. member for York, N.B. (Mr. Foster) did not do that to-day. He is too keen a critic to do that here because he knows that it would be instantly seized upon. But it has been done in the House by other hon. gentlemen, and it has been done by the press outside. It is well to remember that the sum of something less than \$37,000,000, for which they say the late Government carried on the affairs of the country in 1896, was not the total sum of their expenditure, but only the sum of their expenditure on consolidated fund account. They are constantly quoting their expenditure for that year at \$36,000,000 or \$37,000,000—it was nearly \$37,000,000, but they generally speak of it as \$36,000,000—and placing it in comparison with the total expenditures of this Government, while the fact is, that, instead of expending \$36,000,000 as they claim they had in that year an expenditure of \$43,969,198. In one year these very economical gentlemen, who now talk of extravagance, and who now roll up all these items together and place the total in comparison with their expenditure of \$37,000,000 or less in 1896, submitted to this House in 1884 votes of various characters, capital, income and supplementary, aggregating \$53,500,000. Yet, hon. gentlemen opposite and their friends outside will constantly refer to the expenditure of the country as being \$36,000,000 in 1896, and they

will place that against the total votes and appropriations of this Government, including all the various charges. Hon. gentlemen have a great deal to say about increases in the expenditure, but they have given the best evidence of not believing in what they say, because, while they have constantly talked about this expenditure, with the exception of one or two paltry items to which I will refer later on, they never mustered up courage enough to challenge it by a vote of the House. These hon. gentlemen have responsibilities; if we are expending extravagant sums of money, if we are lavish in the money voted for railway subsidies, wharfs and public buildings, why do not these hon. gentlemen take the responsibility which attaches to their position? Their responsibility is to select the items which they say are not warranted, to call the attention of the House to them and to challenge them with their votes. They do not deny that responsibility, they have accepted it, and now, when we are at the close of the session, when they say the public money is being lavishly squandered, out of \$50,000,000 odd laid on the Table of the House, they have ventured to challenge with their votes \$32,000. They ventured to challenge a vote of \$8,000 for a public building in one instance; they challenged a vote of \$5,000 for a wharf in another instance; they challenged a vote of \$1,000 for another wharf; they challenged a vote of \$3,000 in connection with immigration, and they challenged a vote of \$15,000 in connection with the payment to Hall & Myrick, a claim which is due, not by virtue of any principle that we ask the House to adopt, but by virtue of a principle that hon. gentlemen opposite adopted and established long ago. Without discussing the merits of that matter, I want to call the attention of the House and of the public to this, that while these hon. gentlemen make speeches, and while they arraign this Government for an expenditure of \$50,000,000 or more, when they were brought face to face with the items of this expenditure, they were not in a position to proclaim their opposition by embodying it in a vote and placing it on the journals of the House. I think I am correct when I say that a reference to the journals of the House will show that they only challenged the soundness and propriety of items amounting to \$32,000 out of a total expenditure of \$53,000,000. These hon. gentlemen are not likely to be accepted by the public as economists.

OPPOSITION PROPOSED NOT ECONOMY BUT EXTRAVAGANCE.

While they have challenged the soundness of no votes except these paltry sums—paltry in proportion to the total aggregate—amounting to \$32,000, again and again they themselves have made pro-

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 hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Fisher)
 brought down liberal and generous esti-
 mates, he was assailed by the hon. leader
 of the Opposition (Sir Charles Tupper) who
 said that instead of \$20,000 in one item, he
 ought to vote \$100,000. The hon. member
 for West York (Mr. Wallace) said a day or
 two ago that the hon. Minister of Trade and
 Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright) ought
 to have brought down much larger appro-
 priations to extend the trade of the coun-
 try.

Mr. FOSTER. Hear, hear.

Mr. WALLACE. What I said was, Mr.
 Speaker, that instead of \$175,000 for the
 Paris Exposition that money could have
 been more prudently and properly used, or
 a portion of it, by the hon. Minister of Trade
 and Commerce in promoting the interests of
 trade.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Well, I
 will accept the hon. gentleman's statement.
 The hon. gentleman attacked the vote for
 the Paris Exposition, but he had not the
 courage to challenge it by a division of the
 House.

Mr. WALLACE. Is that the only way to
 challenge a vote?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. That is
 the way my hon. friend challenged a vote
 of \$3,000 in connection with immigration
 expenses.

Mr. WALLACE. Cannot I challenge a
 vote by my voice, and did I not do so?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. No, Mr.
 Speaker, the hon. gentleman cannot chal-
 lenge a vote by his voice and then shirk the
 responsibility of placing a motion on record
 because I tell him if he had made that
 motion the hon. gentlemen around him
 would not have supported it, and he would
 have been alone in this House in voting for
 it.

Mr. WALLACE. The hon. gentleman is
 not a good prophet.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I think
 the hon. gentleman will find that I am right.
 When the hon. gentleman attempts to
 assail this Government for placing \$175,000
 in the Estimates for the Paris Exposition, it
 is another indication of the nagging politics
 of that hon. gentleman, but he is not pre-
 pared to challenge the vote and let us see
 how the House stands on the question, and
 whether he has the support of his party in
 condemning this Government for co-operat-
 ing in the Paris Exposition.

Mr. WALLACE. I will have to take the
 opportunity of correcting the hon. gentleman
 again. The hon. gentleman made a state-
 ment of which he could not positively know
 the truth.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. My hon.
 friend can accept either horn of the dilemma
 that he pleases. His opposition to the
 Paris Exhibition is either his individual
 opinion, and, therefore, only entitled to the
 respect which is due to that of one hon.
 member, or it is the policy of his party, be-
 cause my hon. friend claims, and perhaps
 with some justice, to be one of the leaders
 of his party, and if that be the case we must
 hold it responsible for his utterances. The
 hon. gentleman had much to say on another
 point. He asked us: Why do you not give
 us a fast Atlantic line? There is much to be
 said in favour of a fast Atlantic line, but a
 fast Atlantic line, according to the estimates
 of hon. gentlemen themselves, must mean an
 expenditure of three-quarters of a million
 per year. Thus again their complaint
 is not of our lack of economy, but
 it is that we do not expend \$750,000
 more. A leading member in the Opposition
 ranks rose, when we proposed to vote \$25,-
 000 for a public building in one of the cities
 of the Dominion, not to condemn it, but to
 complain that we had not brought down a
 vote of \$100,000 or \$200,000. These, and I
 have only given a few instances, are some of
 the many evidences of economy that we
 have received from hon. gentlemen opposite.
 Nor is that all. Do we forget that after
 opposing the Government's proposal of last
 session for building a railway to the Yukon
 district, although that proposal would not
 have cost the country a penny, the leader
 of the Opposition gravely rose in this House
 this session, and proposed that we should
 spend millions of dollars of the public money
 to build that very railway, together with
 200 miles more down to Klitmat Arm? The
 hon. gentlemen when brought face to face
 with the expenditures of this Government,
 could only find in the whole range of the
 \$50,000,000 odd, \$32,000 which they were
 prepared to challenge; because my hon.
 friend from West York (Mr. Wallace) did
 not take a vote on the appropriation for the
 Paris Exhibition. Yet hon. gentlemen were
 willing to throw across the House sugges-
 tions which, if we had adopted them, would
 have led the country into an expenditure of
 many millions more than we proposed.

Mr. FOSTER. Did we not offer many
 suggestions for economies in other votes?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I decline
 to have any regard for the hon. gentleman's
 suggestions for economy when he is afraid
 to follow them with a division in the House.
 What the hon. gentleman wants to do is to
 pose in this House and before the country

generally as an economist, and then go to various parts of the country interested in these expenditures, and say: "Support me, dear friends, because I did not oppose these votes for your part of the country; I only occupied time in the House to talk against them; I did not vote against them, as I admit these to be great improvements for the country."

RAILWAY SUBSIDIES.

The hon. gentleman said this was the banner year in the matter of railway bonuses. It was not, because as I have shown, in 1884 the hon. gentleman proposed railway bonuses to the amount of \$9,176,000; and having proposed these, he comes into the House and declares that we are extravagant. The hon. gentleman says that many of these railways are unnecessary. Which of them? He must have known, and if so his duty as a servant of the public was to have come before this House with a motion to strike out any railway bonus which he regarded as unnecessary. But the hon. gentleman did not do it. He knows that he would not dare to do it. He knows that railways are not unnecessary, but great factors in the development of the country. But he says some hon. gentlemen in the Liberal party opposed the bonusing of railways. Whether the bonusing of local railways was a wise policy to enter on in 1883 is a fair matter of debate; but after that policy has been pursued for many years, and many millions have been voted for railways in many sections of the country, are we to be told that it is now to stop? Is there any inconsistency in saying that as this has been the fixed policy of the country, and as you have scattered your millions in building railways in many sections of the country, it is only fair that other sections should receive their share of these appropriations?

WHARFS AND OTHER PUBLIC WORKS.

The hon. gentleman had much to say with regard to the Lew policy of voting money for the building of wharfs. This is not a new policy. This Government is but carrying out the policy which former Governments had followed for years. The hon. gentleman has charged us with adopting the new policy of building wharfs on Lake St. John. Why, Sir, the hon. gentleman's own Government built wharfs on Lake St. John and in many other parts of the country years before this Government came into power. The hon. gentleman is not above trying to raise a little sectional feeling by saying that this policy of building wharfs ought to be condemned because it happens to be applied more in one part of the Dominion than another. That was an attempt to appeal to sectionalism which was

not creditable to some hon. gentlemen opposite.

Mr. FOSTER. It was the member for Kingston (Mr. Britton).

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. No, it was not the member for Kingston. It was some hon. gentlemen opposite who complained that we were not applying that policy to the western portions of the Dominion. The Estimates show that where the necessities arise in the central and western portions of the Dominion, they are met; but because some sections of the country by nature require more than other sections, is that a reason why the requirements should be denied? If some one in New Brunswick should say to us: "You do not build canals in New Brunswick; why should they have canals in Ontario?" That would be considered rather absurd. It so happens that the conditions of the country are such that a certain class of public works is needed in one section and another class in another section; and what the Government should do is to see that these different sections are provided for according to their needs, and that the public money is fairly and equitably expended.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The hon. gentleman had something to say about public buildings. He could not approve of the building of a small structure at Victoriaville, which he says has only 2,200 inhabitants. After the hon. gentleman has succeeded in having a handsome building in every Tory town in Canada, he is going to mark the Liberal towns of the country by an absence of public buildings. I do not think that is a policy that would commend itself to the people of this country. The hon. gentleman has said that in this matter he reformed in his later years. He did not do anything of the sort. One of the last acts of the hon. gentleman, before going out of office, was to place before this House an appropriation of \$8,000 for a public building in Marysville, a little village in his own county of York. Victoriaville, he says, has only 2,200 people. Marysville had only 900 people, and the hon. gentleman brought down an appropriation for a public building for that town, not in the olden time when they were wicked, but in the last year of his Government, 1896, in those Estimates which did not get through Parliament. Does the hon. gentleman deny it?

Mr. FOSTER. Yes.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. The hon. gentleman denies that he made an appropriation?

Mr. FOSTER. If the hon. gentleman will allow me, I will tell him just what I deny.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. If the hon. gentleman wishes to contradict me, I will give way. Does he deny the statement that he brought down an appropriation of \$8,000 for a public building in Marysville?

Mr. FOSTER. I am denying the statement.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Is the hon. gentleman saying that statement is not true? I will not give way to the hon. gentleman unless he denies my statement.

Mr. FOSTER. The hon. gentleman dare not give way. He knows that he is misrepresenting the fact.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. If there is any man within the sound of my voice who wants the information, here are the Estimates; and if the item is not in the Estimates which were brought down by the hon. gentleman, then I am wrong, and if he will call my attention to the matter next session, I will publicly apologize.

Mr. BERGERON. We will give it to you next session.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I shall be here next session; I do not know whether my hon. friend will be here or not. So I might follow my hon. friend through all the moods and tenses of his speech. I am reminded that there was a town called Cayuga, with only 500 people, and that the hon. gentleman had a large sum of money voted for a public building there. I have not the pleasure of knowing the place; and as I did not want to make references to the other provinces, I preferred to cite cases in the maritime provinces and in the hon. gentleman's own county; and his own actions show that the ground he now takes is not sincerely and honestly taken.

A GROWING TIME.

With regard to the public expenditure, I have shown that in this growing time there is need for large expenditures on the part of the people of Canada. The hon. gentleman talks of the total expenditure of years ago and the total expenditure now. He takes no account of the growth that has taken place in Canada during these years. I venture to say—it is only a matter of opinion, but an opinion

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with which I believe most thoughtful observers will agree—that Canada has made more progress in the last three years than it had done in any ten previous years. It was necessary that we should meet these growing conditions with growing expenditures; but the volume of the expenditure is to be judged in proportion to the burden it imposes on the people. What is the fact? Though we have had an increased expenditure, we have had a reduction of taxation. We present to the country the proud record of a Government which has met all the obligations of a great and growing time, which has spent money liberally, hon. gentlemen opposite say lavishly, on useful public works for the development of the country, and which is able to point to the fact that these large expenditures for good purposes are accompanied by the very unusual sight for the hon. gentleman of a reduction in the rate of taxation. The hon. gentleman quibbled about the rate of reduction, but the very figures he submitted to the House today recognized the fact that there was a reduction in the rate of taxation. If you take out the increases which have been made on some articles of luxury, and look at the reduction of taxation on the great list of articles which the masses of the people need and consume, you will find that there has been an enormous reduction of taxation. Sir, in this House, not long ago, I presented a statement showing, item by item, what the reductions in taxation were, comparing the old and the new tariff, and what was going to be the result at the next stage of the new tariff, and the result, now that the tariff has come to its fulness—

Mr. DAVIN. Is discrimination against the farmers.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. There is no discrimination against the farmers. We have shown that we have reduced the rate of taxation, and at the same time have met all these great charges on the country.

Hon. gentlemen opposite have tried to alarm the country on the question of the public debt. They talk constantly about its increase. Well, I have here a statement showing the increases in the public debt from 1879 down to the year 1896, covering the last term of the Conservative regime, the total increase of debt was \$118,135,353, and the average increase—

Mr. FOSTER. Put it all in "Hansard."

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Very good; I shall adopt the hon. member's suggestion.

STATEMENT of Average Increase of Net Debt of Canada.

	Net Debt.	Increase of Debt.	Decrease of Debt.	Total Increase of Debt.	Average.
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
1879.....	142,900,187	2,628,117			
1880.....	152,451,588	9,461,401			
1881.....	155,396,780	2,944,191			
1882.....	153,661,650		1,734,129		
1883.....	158,466,714	4,805,063			
1884.....	182,161,850	23,695,135			
1885.....	196,407,692	14,245,841			
1886.....	223,159,107	26,751,414			
1887.....	227,314,775	4,155,668			
1888.....	234,531,358	7,216,582			
1889.....	237,530,041	2,998,683			
1890.....	237,533,211	3,170			
1891.....	237,869,630	275,818			
1892.....	241,131,434	3,322,403			
1893.....	241,681,030	549,605			
1894.....	246,183,029	4,501,989			
1895.....	253,074,927	6,891,897			
1896.....	258,497,432	5,422,505		118,135,353	6,563,075
1897.....	261,538,506	3,041,163			
1898.....	263,956,358	2,417,862			
*1899.....	265,056,398	1,100,000		6,558,965	2,186,321

* Approximate—accounts not closed.

The net result was this. In the eighteen years under Conservative rule the average increase in our public debt was \$6,563,075 per year. In our three years the average increase was \$2,186,321.

Mr. BERGERON. Wait until we see you next year.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. The hon. gentleman has been crying that out for the last three years. The hon. leader of the Opposition, in the first session, said that we were going to plunge into lavish extravagance and create enormous deficits. But instead of deficits, we have handsome surpluses. We have carried on the public service and great public works with a reduced taxation and the smallest perceptible addition to the public debt. I stated several months ago that we would come out of the year, closing on June 30, 1899, with an increase of debt of only about \$1,700,000, as against an average of \$6,500,000 in every year under the administration of hon. gentlemen opposite. Though the accounts are not closed, and I can only present an approximate statement to-day, I can say that the statement I made, namely that the increase of debt would only be \$1,700,000, which was regarded by the House as eminently satisfactory, will be found well within the mark. I venture to predict that when the Public Accounts are laid on the Table next session, we will

have the satisfactory exhibit of having carried these great public works with a reduced rate of taxation and an addition to the public debt of, not \$6,500,000, but very little more than \$1,000,000.

If time would permit I would like to call the attention of the House to the question of the per capita rate.

Mr. DAVIN. May I ask a question? Do I understand the hon. gentleman to say that he has increased the debt by only \$1,000,000?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I say that the increase of debt during the year just closed, for which the accounts are not absolutely complete, but which are in a condition that enables me to speak with approximate accuracy, instead of being \$6,500,000, as it was under hon. gentlemen opposite, will be a little more than \$1,000,000. I say that, and I venture to say that it is a statement which will have a very strong effect on the public mind of Canada, when the people remember the heavy charges we have had to bear and the great public works we have carried on.

My attention has been called to the vote for Marysville building in the year 1895, \$5,000. I said \$8,000. I have not the later Estimates, but my impression is that the vote was increased to \$8,000.

Mr. BERGERON. How much was spent?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I do not think any was spent. It was the fashion to make appropriations and leave them dangling before the people.

Mr. FOSTER. Will my hon. friend say when the first one was?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. My hon. friend distresses his soul about an appropriation of \$8,000 in the village of Victoriaville with a population of 2,200, but is quite prepared to vote for a public building in the little village of Marysville, which has less than 900 inhabitants.

If you have a population of 5,000,000, you can bear an expenditure of, say, \$40,000,000, which is \$8 a head. If you have a population of 6,000,000 you could bear an expenditure of \$48,000,000, and there would be no greater burden on the people. The question is, what is the per capita expenditure? If I had the time, I would like to go into this and show that the expenditure per head of the population has been well kept down. We had \$7.39 per head in 1898, chargeable to consolidated account. The year just closed the total expenditure will be about \$7.77, an apparent increase, but if you take out of that the Yukon expenditure, which is entirely exceptional, and the additional expenditure on the Intercolonial Railroad—both of which are profitable investments, bringing back more money into the treasury than was paid out—leave out these two exceptional expenditures, and you will find that the expenditure of 1899 is approximately \$7.31, which is lower than the usual expenditure of the late Government for a long period of time. I do not propose to keep the attention of the House fur-

ther, but if time permitted I would be able to give at every point most ample vindication of the expenditure which this Government has made. In this growing time, the demand of the people is not for niggardly economy. That is true economy which adapts itself to the new and growing conditions of the country. If the people of Canada, above all, if the Liberals of Canada, could be shown that there had been expenditure made through corrupt means and for corrupt purposes, they would be prepared to condemn the Government. But, so long as these expenditures can be shown to have been made for the development of the country—honestly and faithfully made—I have no fear of the criticism which the public will bring to bear upon us for these expenditures. The hon. gentleman to-day ventured, Sir, to read us a lecture upon public morality, upon faith and honour. Surely, the hon. gentleman was not serious; surely, with the record of the Ministry of which he was a member, surely, with the record of the events in which he was a prominent figure, he will not venture to call public men in question on the point of their public morality, or of faith, or honour. The hon. gentleman sat in a Ministry, and acted with a party, which for a quarter of a century pursued a policy of plunder, a policy of corruption. Why, they do not deny it. The hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron), in this House, when reference has been made to these matters, says: Oh, but these men were punished. True, they were punished. They were expelled from office, and will remain out of office a long time. But, when they come forward and talk of faith, and honour, and public morality, we have some reason, I think, to call attention to the position in which they stand.

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